Sermon- 9th Pent. Aug. 1&2, 2020

Texts: Is. 55:1-5 & Matt. 14:13-21

Title: “Free Food”

Prayer

“And He said, “Bring them here to me.”

Salutation

**Bridge**

 **I have a question for you. If someone came to your door and said to you, “Hello! I’m from the government and I have a bag of food for you, and it’s completely free”, how would you respond? In this world economy, many of us would not trust them and would simply close the door. Some would say, “Thanks, but what’s the catch?” But others, out of sheer desperation would grab the bag, welcome them in and be filled! It is all in perspective of the day and hour, and of how one sees God’s Word and the gifts He brings.**

**In the Gospel for today, it tells us of a day on the shore, and like many today, the people had great need. The Romans had conquered their land. People were crucified on poles lining the streets. The land was ravaged, looted, and burned. Nothing was the same. Their way of commerce, their fear of being in public lest they be singled out by Roman soldiers, and their way of worship, which was foreign to their captors. Their entire way of life had changed. They were lonely, afraid and hungry. They were now living in a new normal. One which brought domination by evil forces to change their culture. One which made them yearn for something else. One which made them hunger. What kind of need are we speaking of here that day? The physical. Food for the body. And trust me, the Romans didn’t come to their door with a free bag of food. And the story in the Matthew text is not a parable in the strictest sense like those that surround it in chapters 13 and 15. However, it is a great lesson to learn from. First, for the disciples that day, and now for us. Let’s talk about the disciples first.**

**At this time of his ministry, Jesus had been rejected over and over again. Just before his death, even His cousin, John the Baptist had questioned who Jesus was. And now, Jesus goes out onto the lake and tries to find a quiet place to reflect on the death of John who was murdered by the ruler. That was a hopeless task, for the people followed Him along the shore. These two facts must have confused his disciples even more. How so? On the one hand they had seen Him rejected by the authorities and the people of his hometown. On the other hand, people followed Him in droves. They probably wrote that off as merely a way to be fed, because so many after the rebellion of the Maccabees and the occupation of their land had become extremely poor. Because they were literally taxed to death. The people hated the Romans for that. (Matthew sure lived with that, for he had been a tax collector.) Consequently, they were hungry. But with Jesus there were always *the miracles*. The disciples had seen them over and over again. Was He the Christ? Was He merely a prophet? They still had their doubts. Therefore, the need for the lesson they were about to see and learn from.**

**Lesson? What lesson is there in the simple story of feeding five thousand people, with nothing but a couple of fish and a few loaves? The setting was different this time. Jesus didn’t have them listen to a long message like He had when He had given them the Beatitudes. The message was the two-fold feeding itself. And it should have answered their question, “Was He the Christ?” If they would only see it and understand a couple of things.**

**First, they saw a loving and compassionate man that healed the sick as soon as He got off the boat. It must have taken some time to heal so many. It wasn’t anything like the so called “faith healings” of today. No amount of inner faith accomplished these healings of body. Oh no. Jesus just healed. Without condition. Circumstances like this bring faith and although the passage doesn’t say how many believed because of it that day, I’m sure some saw, were healed, and believed.**

**Second, the people thirsted, but they didn’t know it was for more than just food and drink. And at the end of the day, Jesus would say, “You give them something to eat.” I can imagine the look on the disciples faces. A big, blank, dumb look kind of thing. At times, when faced with difficult things, we disciples wonder and even say out loud, “How am I supposed to do that, Lord?” We are challenged in much the very same way at times, aren’t we? And when it happens, we only see the impossible. Just like the disciples. I haven’t been asked to feed five thousand, but I have been asked to feed orphans, homeless, and school children. And even that seems impossible. Especially when I use the “but I have to stay on budget” excuse. These very same challenges face us all, every day. And Jesus, not only said to them “You give them something to eat”, He says it to us as well. He asks us to meet these challenges when they appear, and not just when it is convenient.**

**But here is the important part that we almost always fail to see when opportunity appears, He said, “Bring them here to me.” We sinners always doubt. We sinners rarely see the will of God. We sinners always try to do things ourselves. We sinners look for all the humanly answers we can, even sometimes relying on them, instead of HIM. It’s a matter of trust. Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." The Isaiah passage for today tells we sinners *Who to trust* and *Who to bring* our cares to: “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?" Jesus says, "Come to Me. Just trust Me!" And in order to trust Him for all our physical needs, we need faith to do so. Faith satisfies! It fills the soul with spiritual food! With faith all our needs are met. In Jesus, all the needs of body and soul are met.**

 **In bringing our needs to Christ, we can always be assured they are heard, but not only that, but known before we ask. I marvel in His steadfast love for me. When I ask Him and He answers my prayer, sometimes almost immediately, I cry out, "Praise the Lord!" for He confirms our prayers in so many different ways. Like the other night when I prayed for Nathan Vocke. He answered my prayer in the affirmative within a minute. It was one of those mind boggling, PTL moments for sure, Our God is a gracious God. And by Him we are filled.**

**What lessons are in this passage? There are threefold lessons in it. First, that Jesus is Lord of all things, creating enough food from five loaves and two fish to feed over five thousand and still have plenty for twelve baskets to be collected afterwards. One for each disciple, one for each tribe and plenty for all of us. Secondly, therefore, He shows us that our needs are filled in trusting Him to do so even in times of dire need and circumstances. And last of all, that we, in these times so much like those of the past, we carry the twelve baskets to others. Baskets filled with food for the body and more importantly, food for the soul.**

**Today, like God’s people of old, people have been locked into their homes and are suffering from a supposed imposed new normal. They are reacting in many ways out of need. Physically, because they may have lost their jobs and can't pay the bills. They may not be able to buy groceries. And things may get much worse. Be honest, are things really getting better? And spiritually, because they may be filled with so much hate they strike out against their neighbors and society. They are suffering with a very great need. But they are searching. Searching for something, anything, or anyone to fill their need. Because they don't know about trusting Jesus. What can we share then from our basket of faith? By His power we share our faith, show them *our* trust in the Lord, and bring compassion and how even though things may be tough, we suffer along with them.**

**We, too suffer, because we have not been able to congregate as normal. What is the purpose of coming together? To receive. To receive the gifts of hearing His Word, being washed in spiritual waters and Christ's body and blood. Is this scene not reminiscent of what happens here at the rail? Jesus blesses the food. He gives the people broken bread. He feeds them, ALL of them, in a great miracle of free food. The Lord's Supper was to come later, where He fed the disciples His body and blood in the greatest miracle of all. They didn't understand it. I still don't. But if I don't that's not important, God's Word is what's important, because it tells us we are satisfied in it, because His blood satisfied the penalty for sin with the Father. Because we ALL are sinners, we need this miracle. This feeding is a picture of the saving Christ, of feeding them the physical. But a precursor of the greater miracle which saves the soul. That day, they all ate and were satisfied. Today, in the greater miracle we are fully satisfied with free spiritual food. That is what we share with those that are searching.**

 **Today a kind of imposed new normal is the worst, (that is, not being able to be here with you all), for without our gatherings we suffer. I thank God that He has provided us the ability to do what we can do. In that ability, we carry our baskets differently. But we continue to trust Him to help us do so, to continue to fill them and take them out to others. We can only trust Him and no one else, for men always fail. We watch a world that seems to be unraveling around us. At our house we ask, "What is next?" I say to you, be ready for almost anything. I'm completely serious. Because that is what your neighbor is thinking and dealing with, too! However, through us, by His power, the Gospel is still proclaimed, that Christ died for us all, and that by His grace, through faith, all can be saved. In that, we have peace. So, we carry Him freely, as He gave to us freely, to all those who are searching. And we wait for the Blessed Hope.**

**At the beginning, I posed a hypothetical question. Free Food? What would you do? The lesson the Lord gives us today shows us how to respond. He says to us, “Bring them to me.” The Father said through Isaiah, “Give ear and come to me, hear me that your soul may live.” So, we trust Him to provide and we share all we have been provided by Him, with baskets filled with food for the body and food for the soul. For our benefit and to His glory. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.**